

United States Senate  
WASHINGTON, DC 20510

June 18, 2012

The Honorable Barack Obama  
President of the United States  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Ave NW  
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

We write to express our support for the continued funding of incentives to encourage innovative State and local efforts to reform our educational system. We believe that initiatives like Race to the Top (RTTT), Investing in Innovation (i3), and School Improvement Grants (SIG), are central to supporting reforms that ensure that all students graduate from high school college and career-ready and improve the productivity of our education system.

As you know, the challenge of increasing student achievement continues. In the last three years, RTTT motivated states to change their laws and commit to critical reforms even before receiving any federal funding. As a result, 22 states have enacted or changed laws to improve teacher quality and 16 states changed their laws to focus more resources and attention on improving their low-performing schools. RTTT funding is helping states pursue bold reforms in elementary and secondary schools in rural, suburban, and urban areas to improve academic achievement and close achievement gaps. These reforms include transitioning to college and career-ready standards and assessments, supporting and improving the effectiveness of teachers and principals, building data systems that support instruction, and turning around the lowest performing schools. We also support the Administration's new district-level Race to the Top competition, which will further recognize and support success and innovation at the local level.

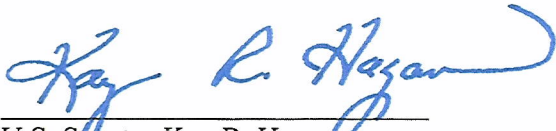
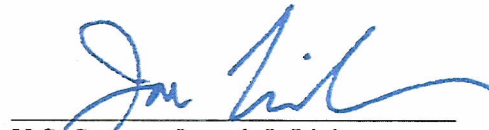

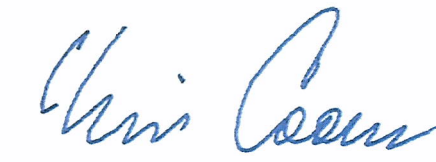
The i3 program received over 2,000 applicants over the past two years and 72 grants have been awarded to entities working to create and spread solutions that will support thousands of teachers and millions of students. We believe this is evidence that districts, states, and their entrepreneurial partners are ready to break the mold of the status quo and develop new solutions to meet critical needs. The i3 program has generated considerable excitement and continues to help facilitate strong private-public partnerships, which helped raise \$18 million from the private sector during last year's competition alone to help fund these projects.

In every state in the nation, there are schools that have persistently failed to provide students with a quality education. We know that turning around schools is incredibly difficult work and we appreciate the creation of a new and much more ambitious SIG program that continues to accelerate achievement in our nation's lowest-performing five percent of schools. These new

resources support the collaboration of school leaders, teachers, and community partners to undertake this challenging work. For decades, children have been cheated out of a world-class education in these schools, and we are now seeing signs of improvement. In nearly 60 percent of SIG schools, the percentage of students who were proficient in math or reading went up in the first year including those in rural areas.

Race to the Top, the Investing in Innovation Fund and the School Improvement Grant Program have given states and school districts an incredible opportunity to reshape what public education looks like for students across the country. These programs have moved us further down the path to ensuring that every student no matter their zip code receives a high-quality education. We look forward to working with you to support and build on the successes of these programs.

Sincerely,

  
U.S. Senator Kay R. Hagan  
U.S. Senator Michael F. Bennet  
U.S. Senator Herb Kohl  
U.S. Senator Joseph I. Lieberman  
U.S. Senator Mary L. Landrieu  
U.S. Senator Thomas R. Carper  
U.S. Senator Christopher A. Coons